

Governor Phil Murphy

# Governor Murphy Signs Bill Expanding New Jersey's Safe Haven Infant Protection Act

09/1/2023

**TRENTON** – Governor Phil Murphy today signed legislation to expand New Jersey's Safe Haven Infant Protection Act to clarify that people who give birth in licensed general hospitals may safely surrender their infant under the act. This action comes during Safe Haven Awareness Month, which aims to raise awareness about the safe and legal options available to parents who wish to give up a baby they are unable or unwilling to care for.

The Safe Haven Infant Protection Act currently permits parents to safely and anonymously surrender an unharmed infant that is no more than 30 days old to employees of one of the following sites without facing any legal repercussions:

- police stations;
- hospital emergency departments;
- 24/7 fire stations;
- ambulance, first aid, or rescue squads providing services 24/7.

Going forward, this bill clarifies that parents will now also be able to leave their baby at a licensed general hospital after giving birth there, if the parent(s) indicates that they do not plan to return for their infant.

"Whatever the reason may be, some people simply aren't ready to be parents when their baby is born. In New Jersey, we offer a legal, judgement-free way for individuals to surrender their baby to professionals who will ensure the infant receives the care they need," **said Governor Murphy**. "Expanding this critical law will make it easier for residents to safely give their baby up after childbirth by making entire hospitals safe surrender sites."

The bill (A-4110/S-2828) also expands the civil and criminal immunity provided to certain professionals under the act to all hospital employees – not just those working in the emergency department – so that any adult employee of a licensed general hospital can now accept a surrendered infant. Police officers, firefighters, and ambulance/first aid/rescue squad members acting in good faith to execute their responsibility under the Safe Haven Infant Protection Act will also continue to have civil and criminal immunity.

Once cleared by a medical professional, infants who have been surrendered are placed into a foster or pre-adoptive home through the New Jersey Department of Children and Families.

"Since August 2000, nearly 90 infants have been protected from harm because the Safe Haven law provides an assurance of no shame, no blame and no names when parents, or their designees, make the hard, yet loving decision to surrender a baby they cannot care for," **said Department of Children and Families' Commissioner, Christine Norbut Beyer**. "This law expands the 'Safe Haven zone' from just emergency rooms to the entire hospital, ensuring parents in maternity wards and throughout hospitals have this life-saving option available to them and can be afforded a safe delivery."

The bipartisan legislation was sponsored by Senator Kristin Corrado and Assemblywoman Mila Jasey, as well as Senator Shirley Turner and Assemblywomen Shavonda Sumter and Angela McKnight.

"Every adult and teen parent who feels unprepared to care for their newborn should be aware of the life-saving options that are available for their infant child," **said Senator Corrado**. "Giving parents more options to safely surrender their newborn after birth not only protects more infants from otherwise dangerous or deadly situations, but it also prevents parents from being prosecuted as well. I'm proud to sponsor this life-saving legislation and glad that it was signed into law today."

"For over 20 years, New Jersey's Safe Haven Law has protected both innocent newborns and parents not ready or able to take on the immense responsibility of caring for a child," **said Assemblywoman Jasey**. "Today, we are adapting our laws to provide parents with an additional option to safely and legally surrender their newborn baby without fearing prosecution."

"In many situations where a new parents feels they are unable to care for their baby the safest option for both the parent and the newborn is to surrender the child," **said Senator Turner**. "This legislation will expand the Safe Haven Infant Protection Act to allow parents to do so right at the hospital after giving birth, without any prosecution."

"It's important to ensure parents know they have options to safely surrender an unwanted infant, giving the newborn the opportunity to be placed in an appropriate, loving home," **said Assemblywoman Sumter**. "Allowing a newborn to be surrendered at the hospital where mom is located protects the health and well-being of the infant."

"Regardless of why a parent is unable to raise their infant, they deserve to be able to make the right choice for themselves while also prioritizing the health and well-being of the child. Our Safe Haven Law makes this possible and has seen 86 babies legally surrendered since 2000," **said Assemblywoman McKnight**. "The decision to surrender your newborn is difficult and emotional. With this law, we are giving parents another logical safe haven drop-off location to protect both them and their infant."

New Jersey was one of the first states to implement a Safe Haven law back in 2000. More information can be found at [www.njsafehaven.org](http://www.njsafehaven.org) ([https://urldefense.com/v3/\\_http://www.njsafehaven.org\\_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!!a1Qlrx5NISBjnmLM1MsBhvpbBUUgXwgc3kVUJTMbDxrtMhymk0ZNswo7Vj0L0qUk1b32yOEEJ-JQdj9kKyc9I\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_http://www.njsafehaven.org_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!!a1Qlrx5NISBjnmLM1MsBhvpbBUUgXwgc3kVUJTMbDxrtMhymk0ZNswo7Vj0L0qUk1b32yOEEJ-JQdj9kKyc9I$)) or by calling the Safe Haven Hotline at 1-877-839-2339 (tel:18778392339).

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